

The Round System in Elementary English Education in Japan: Insights from Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs)

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perspectives of elementary Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) on the implementation of the round system in English education in Kumagaya City. Specifically, it described the profile of ALTs, identified the opportunities and challenges encountered in utilizing the round system, and proposed an action plan to improve its implementation. The study employed a descriptive qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews with six Filipino ALTs assigned to different elementary schools in the city. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns. Findings revealed that most ALTs were young professionals with bachelor's degrees, teaching experience, and participation in professional development activities. The round system created opportunities such as improved instructional delivery, increased learner confidence and motivation, stronger collaboration between ALTs and Japanese teachers, professional growth, and enhanced school and community engagement. However, challenges were also encountered, including limited instructional time, classroom management concerns, coordination difficulties with Japanese teachers, continuity of learning issues, cultural and linguistic adaptation, limited teaching resources, workload and scheduling demands, and difficulties in monitoring student learning Outcomes-Based on these findings, an action plan was proposed to strengthen collaboration, improve instructional coordination, expand professional development opportunities, enhance resource availability, and establish effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms..

Keywords: - Round System, Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), English Education, Teacher Collaboration, Instructional Challenges

INTRODUCTION

English education has remained a significant component of global educational systems because of its role in communication, academic advancement, and international competitiveness. In Japan, English instruction has evolved from traditional grammar-translation approaches toward communicative and learner-centered methods in response to globalization and educational reforms. The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) has strengthened English education policies to enhance learners' communicative competence and intercultural understanding. One of the initiatives implemented to support this objective is the deployment of Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in elementary schools through the round system, where teachers rotate across multiple schools to maximize instructional support and equitable access to English education.

The round system provides opportunities for learners to interact with fluent English speakers and engage in communicative activities that improve listening and speaking skills. It also

supports Japanese teachers through co-teaching, mentoring, and collaborative lesson planning. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), communicative language teaching enhances learners' ability to use language meaningfully in authentic contexts. Similarly, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasized that collaborative and practice-based teaching approaches contribute significantly to teacher development and instructional effectiveness. In Kumagaya City, the round system has become a practical response to the shortage of specialized English teachers and disparities in educational resources among schools.

Despite its advantages, implementing the round system also presents challenges. ALTs encounter difficulties related to instructional continuity, classroom management, workload, scheduling, and coordination with Japanese teachers. The rotational nature of the program may limit opportunities for sustained learner support and monitoring of academic progress. Moreover, cultural and linguistic adaptation remains a concern for foreign teachers working in Japanese school environments. Butler (2011) noted that effective English language instruction in Asian contexts requires contextualized and culturally responsive teaching practices. Likewise, Machida (2016) highlighted that insufficient collaboration and training may hinder the effectiveness of English instruction in elementary schools.

The study is anchored on the need to examine the perspectives of elementary ALTs regarding the opportunities and challenges associated with the round system in Kumagaya City's English education. Understanding these experiences is essential in developing responsive strategies and interventions that can strengthen instructional delivery, teacher collaboration, learner development, and program sustainability. The findings of the study may provide valuable insights for school administrators, policymakers, and educational institutions to enhance the implementation of the round system and improve the quality of English education in elementary schools.

Statement of the Problem

This study determined the effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies in addressing reading difficulties among grade 1 learners in public schools as inputs to the early literacy intervention program. Specifically, the following problems were answered:

1. What is the profile of teachers in Kumagaya?
2. What are the opportunities in the utilization of Round Systems in the English Education as perceived by elementary Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in Kumagaya City, Japan?
3. What are the challenges in the utilization of Round Systems in English Education as perceived by Elementary Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in Kumagaya City, Japan?
4. What action plan can be proposed to enhance the utilization of round system?

Scope and Delimitations

This study examined the perspectives of elementary Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) on the implementation of the round system in English education in Kumagaya City. It examined the opportunities and challenges ALTs encountered in instructional delivery, learner development, collaboration, and professional growth. The study was limited to elementary school ALTs and excluded secondary teachers, students, parents, and administrators..

Review of Related Literature

English education has become a major priority in many countries due to the growing importance of English as an international language. In Japan, English instruction has undergone significant reforms aimed at improving learners' communicative competence and preparing students for global participation. Historically, English teaching in Japan relied heavily on grammar-translation and memorization methods, which emphasized reading and writing skills more than authentic communication (Shimizu, 2010). However, recent educational reforms introduced by MEXT shifted the focus toward communicative language teaching (CLT), learner-centered instruction, and practical language use.

One strategy implemented to strengthen English instruction is the deployment of Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) through the round system. The round system refers to the rotational assignment of ALTs across several schools to maximize the use of limited human resources and provide equitable access to English instruction (Mahboob & Tilakaratna, 2012). In Kumagaya City, ALTs rotate among elementary schools to support English classes, facilitate communicative activities, and assist Japanese teachers in improving instructional delivery. Richards and Rodgers (2014) emphasized that communicative approaches improve learners' language proficiency by exposing them to authentic interaction and meaningful communication tasks.

The role of ALTs extends beyond language instruction. According to CLAIR (2022), ALTs also serve as cultural ambassadors, promoting intercultural understanding and learner motivation. Their participation in classroom activities, games, storytelling, and school events allows learners to experience authentic English communication while fostering cultural awareness. MEXT (2018) further explained that ALTs support Japanese teachers through co-teaching and lesson planning, thereby contributing to teacher professional development and instructional innovation.

Instructional delivery in English language teaching is central to learner achievement and communicative competence. Richards and Rodgers (2014) argued that communicative language teaching enables students to develop fluency, interaction skills, and confidence in language use. Similarly, Ellis (2017) highlighted the value of task-based learning in promoting authentic communication through role-playing, problem-solving, and collaborative tasks. Effective instructional delivery also requires differentiated instruction and technology integration to address diverse learner needs (Tomlinson, 2013).

Learner development in second language acquisition depends on exposure, interaction, and motivation. Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis explained that learners acquire language through comprehensible input slightly beyond their current level of proficiency. Swain (2000) also stressed that language production helps learners identify gaps in their understanding and improve fluency. In elementary English education, interactive activities such as songs, storytelling, and games enhance learner engagement and confidence (Cameron, 2001).

Teacher collaboration is another important factor in the success of bilingual and multicultural classrooms. Friend and Cook (2017) emphasized that collaboration enables teachers to share expertise, coordinate instruction, and address learner needs more effectively. In Japan, collaboration between ALTs and Japanese teachers allows integration of authentic language input with classroom management and curriculum alignment (Butler, 2011). Effective

collaboration requires co-planning, clear role definition, and institutional support to ensure continuity and coherence in instruction.

Professional development is equally essential for sustaining instructional quality. Richards and Farrell (2005) described professional growth as a continuous process involving reflection, collaboration, and adaptation to new teaching approaches. Workshops, seminars, peer observations, and collaborative planning help language teachers improve instructional strategies and intercultural competence. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) noted that practice-based professional development positively influences teacher effectiveness and learner outcomes.

Despite these benefits, several challenges affect the implementation of the round system. One major issue is the continuity of instruction, as ALTs rotate across schools and may have limited opportunities to consistently monitor learner progress. Harmer (2015) emphasized that language learning requires regular reinforcement and sustained interaction. Classroom management difficulties, cultural adaptation, workload, and coordination challenges also affect the effectiveness of ALTs in schools (Marzano et al., 2003).

Program sustainability is another important consideration. Fullan (2007) explained that sustainable educational reforms require institutional support, teacher development, resource allocation, and community engagement. In language education, sustainable programs depend on collaboration among schools, local governments, and stakeholders to ensure continuity and effectiveness (OECD, 2019). Continuous monitoring and evaluation also help identify gaps and improve program implementation over time (Stufflebeam & Coryn, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and the Theory of Collaborative Professionalism. These theories explain how language learning occurs through interaction, collaboration, and meaningful communication within educational settings.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction and guided participation. Learners develop knowledge and skills through collaboration with more knowledgeable individuals within the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of the round system, ALTs support learners and Japanese teachers by facilitating interactive English activities, modeling communicative strategies, and encouraging participation. The theory explains how co-teaching and collaborative learning contribute to language acquisition and learner development.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985) further supports the study by emphasizing the importance of comprehensible input in second language acquisition. According to Krashen, learners acquire language when they are exposed to language that is slightly beyond their current level of understanding. ALTs provide authentic English exposure through classroom interaction, storytelling, songs, and communicative activities, thereby enhancing learners' listening and speaking skills.

The study also draws on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which focuses on developing communicative competence through meaningful interaction rather than memorizing grammar rules (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The round system allows learners to engage in

authentic communication with ALTs, improving confidence and fluency in English.

Finally, the Theory of Collaborative Professionalism emphasizes the value of teamwork, shared expertise, and reflective practice among educators (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). Collaboration between ALTs and Japanese teachers strengthens instructional delivery, professional growth, and program sustainability. These theories collectively provide a framework for understanding the opportunities and challenges encountered in implementing the round system in Kumagaya City's English education..

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study illustrates the relationships among the profile of elementary Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), the opportunities and challenges encountered in implementing the round system, and the proposed action plan for improving English education in Kumagaya City.

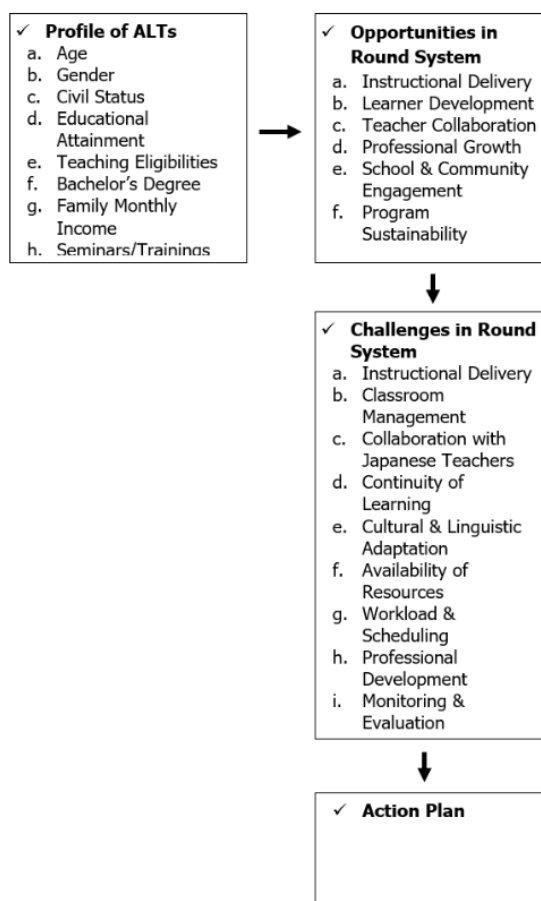


Fig. 1 Thematic Paradigm Diagram

The first component of the framework is the profile of ALTs, which includes age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, teaching eligibility, years of service, and seminars or trainings attended. These variables provide contextual information about the respondents' personal and

professional characteristics that may influence their perspectives and experiences within the round system.

The second component focuses on the opportunities encountered by ALTs in implementing the round system. These opportunities include improved instructional delivery, learner development, teacher collaboration, professional growth, school and community engagement, and program sustainability. These factors represent the positive contributions of the round system to English education and highlight how rotational teaching arrangements support both learners and teachers.

The third component consists of the challenges encountered by ALTs, including classroom management, coordination with Japanese teachers, continuity of learning, cultural and linguistic adaptation, workload and scheduling concerns, limited teaching resources, and difficulties in monitoring learner outcomes. These challenges may affect the effectiveness and sustainability of the round system if not properly addressed.

The final component is the proposed action plan, which serves as the study's output. The action plan aims to strengthen collaboration, improve instructional coordination, enhance professional development opportunities, provide adequate teaching resources, and establish effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Through this framework, the study demonstrates how understanding ALTs' perspectives can guide the development of responsive strategies to improve the implementation of the round system and enhance the quality of English education in Kumagaya City.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research methods and procedures used in the study examining the perspectives of elementary Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) on the implementation of the round system in English education in Kumagaya City. It includes the research design, research steps, data and sample collection, data analysis methods, research validation, and ethical considerations employed to ensure credibility and reliability.

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore and understand the perspectives of elementary Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) regarding the implementation of the round system in English education in Kumagaya City. Qualitative research is appropriate for studies that examine participants' lived experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of social phenomena in their natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The descriptive qualitative approach enabled the researcher to gather detailed accounts of the opportunities and challenges encountered by ALTs in instructional delivery, collaboration, learner development, and program sustainability.

The study utilized semi-structured interviews as the primary method of data gathering. This approach allowed participants to express their experiences freely while enabling the researcher to probe deeper into significant issues related to the round system. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), semi-structured interviews provide flexibility and depth in qualitative inquiry by allowing participants to elaborate on their experiences and viewpoints. The design was appropriate because the study aimed to generate context-based insights to inform the

development of an action plan to improve the implementation of the round system in elementary schools.

Research Steps

The study followed a systematic process in conducting the research. First, the researcher secured approval from the relevant authorities and obtained permission from the schools and participants involved in the study. Second, relevant literature and studies were reviewed to establish the research's theoretical and conceptual foundations. Third, semi-structured interview questions were prepared and validated by research experts to ensure clarity and relevance.

After validation, interviews were conducted among selected elementary Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) assigned in Kumagaya City. Responses were recorded, transcribed, and organized systematically. The collected data were then analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns related to opportunities and challenges in implementing the round system. Finally, the findings were interpreted and used as a basis for developing a proposed action plan to enhance program implementation.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

The study used purposive sampling to select participants. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research to identify participants with direct knowledge and relevant experiences of the phenomenon under investigation (Palinkas et al., 2015). The study's respondents consisted of six Filipino Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) assigned to elementary schools in Kumagaya City under the round system. These participants were selected because they had firsthand experience with rotational teaching arrangements and were capable of providing substantial information about the program's opportunities and challenges.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted individually with each participant. The interview questions focused on instructional delivery, learner development, teacher collaboration, professional growth, classroom management, continuity of learning, cultural adaptation, workload, and program sustainability. The use of semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to gather in-depth responses while maintaining consistency across participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Prior to the interviews, informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants were informed about the objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any stage of the research process. Interviews were conducted at mutually convenient schedules and settings to ensure participant comfort and openness. Responses were audio-recorded with permission and later transcribed for analysis. Supporting notes and observations were also documented to enrich data interpretation and improve the credibility of findings.

Data Analysis Methods

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting recurring patterns or themes in textual data. According to Braun and Clarke (2021), thematic analysis enables researchers to organize and describe qualitative data in rich detail while interpreting participants' experiences and meanings.

This method was appropriate for the study because it enabled the researcher to examine the perspectives of Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) on the opportunities and challenges encountered during the implementation of the round system.

The analysis began with familiarization with the data through repeated readings of interview transcripts and a review of field notes. Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and completeness of responses. After familiarization, the researcher conducted initial coding to identify significant statements, keywords, and recurring themes related to instructional delivery, learner development, teacher collaboration, classroom management, continuity of learning, cultural adaptation, workload, and program sustainability.

Following the coding process, related codes were grouped into categories to generate broader themes. These themes were reviewed, refined, and organized according to the study's objectives. The researcher ensured that the generated themes accurately represented the participants' experiences and perspectives. To improve credibility, peer debriefing and member checking were utilized. Member checking involved confirming interpretations and findings with selected participants to validate the accuracy of the researcher's analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Thematic analysis enabled the researcher to identify common experiences among participants and recognize unique perspectives relevant to the implementation of the round system. The interpreted findings served as the basis for developing a proposed action plan to improve instructional coordination, teacher collaboration, professional development, and the sustainability of the program in Kumagaya City elementary schools.

Validation

To ensure validity and trustworthiness, several qualitative validation strategies were employed. First, the interview guide underwent content validation by experts in education and qualitative research to ensure the questions were relevant, clear, and aligned with the study's objectives. Second, member checking was conducted by presenting summaries of responses and interpretations to selected participants for confirmation and clarification. Third, peer debriefing was utilized to minimize researcher bias and improve consistency in data interpretation. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), credibility and trustworthiness in qualitative research are strengthened through participant validation, triangulation, and reflective analysis. These validation procedures ensured that the findings accurately represented the perspectives and experiences of the participants.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The study was limited to six Filipino Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) assigned to elementary schools in Kumagaya City; therefore, the findings may not fully represent the experiences of all ALTs in Japan. The study also focused only on participants' perspectives and did not include students, Japanese teachers, or administrators. Additionally, the research did not measure actual learner performance or English proficiency outcomes.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and voluntary participation was

emphasized through informed consent procedures. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by withholding personal identifiers and securely storing interview data. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. According to the American Psychological Association (2020), ethical research practices protect participants' rights, dignity, and well-being throughout the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Assistant Language Teachers

Table 1 presents the profile of elementary Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in Kumagaya City in terms of age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, teaching eligibility, bachelor's degree, average family monthly income, years in service, and seminars or trainings attended. These variables provide contextual information regarding the demographic and professional characteristics of the respondents relevant to the implementation of the round system.

Table 1: *Profile of Assistant Language Teachers*

Profile	Category	Frequency	Percent
Age	25 and below	1	16.7
	26–30	3	50.0
	31–35	1	16.7
	36 and above	1	16.7
Sex	Male	2	33.3
	Female	4	66.7
Civil Status	Single	4	66.7
	Married	2	33.3
Highest Educational Attainment	Bachelor's Degree	4	66.7
	Master's Degree	2	33.3
Teaching Eligibilities	Licensed Professional Teacher (LPT)	4	66.7
	None / Other Certification	2	33.3
Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor of Secondary Education (English)	3	50.0
	Bachelor of Elementary Education	2	33.3
	Other Degree	1	16.7
Average Family Monthly Income	Below ¥200,000	2	33.3
	¥200,001 – ¥300,000	3	50.0
	Above ¥300,000	1	16.7
Years in Service as ALT	1–2 years	2	33.3
	3–4 years	3	50.0
	5 years and above	1	16.7
Number of Seminars or Trainings Attended	1–3	2	33.3
	4–6	3	50.0
	7 and above	1	16.7

The profile of elementary Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in Kumagaya City provides important contextual information regarding their professional qualifications, demographic characteristics, and teaching experiences in the implementation of the round system. Variables such as age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, teaching eligibility, years in service, and participation in seminars or training significantly influence teachers' instructional practices, adaptability, and professional effectiveness.

The findings suggest that many ALTs belong to the younger workforce, which may contribute to their adaptability to multicultural teaching environments and communicative teaching strategies. Younger educators are often more receptive to technology integration and learner-centered pedagogies, which are essential in English language instruction (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Educational attainment and teaching eligibility likewise reflect ALTs' professional preparedness to handle English classes and collaborate with Japanese teachers. According to Richards and Farrell (2005), teachers with stronger academic preparation and continuous professional development demonstrate greater instructional confidence and classroom effectiveness.

Years in service as ALT also contribute to professional competence and intercultural understanding. Experienced ALTs tend to develop better classroom management skills, improved communication strategies, and stronger collaboration with local teachers. Similarly, participation in seminars and trainings enhances teachers' pedagogical knowledge and responsiveness to diverse learner needs (Day & Sachs, 2016). Continuous professional learning allows teachers to adapt to changing educational demands and strengthens their ability to implement communicative and interactive teaching approaches effectively.

The profile variables also provide insight into the socioeconomic and personal conditions of teachers that may affect job satisfaction and performance. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018) emphasized that workload, work conditions, and professional support influence teacher motivation and retention. Understanding these demographic and professional characteristics is therefore essential in designing responsive support systems and professional development programs for ALTs under the round system.

Opportunities in the Utilization of the Round System in English Education as Perceived by Elementary Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs)

Table 2 presents opportunities for the use of the round system in English education as perceived by elementary Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in Kumagaya City. The opportunities are categorized into instructional delivery, learner development, teacher collaboration, professional growth, school and community engagement, and program sustainability.

The opportunities presented by the round system highlight its contribution to improving English education in Kumagaya City. The rotational deployment of Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) creates avenues for enhanced instructional delivery, learner development, teacher collaboration, professional growth, school engagement, and program sustainability. These opportunities demonstrate how the round system supports both educational quality and equitable access to English instruction across schools.

Table 2: *Opportunities in the Utilization of the Round System in English Education as Perceived by Elementary Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs)*

Areas of Opportunities	Description
Instructional Delivery	Opportunities for improving teaching strategies, communicative activities, and classroom instruction.
Learner Development	Opportunities for enhancing learners' English proficiency, confidence, and participation.
Teacher Collaboration	Opportunities for co-teaching, lesson planning, and sharing of instructional practices between ALTs and Japanese teachers.

Professional Growth	Opportunities for ALTs to improve teaching competencies, intercultural skills, and pedagogical knowledge.
School and Community Engagement	Opportunities for participation in school and community activities that support English education.
Program Sustainability	Opportunities for strengthening the continuity, effectiveness, and long-term implementation of the round system.

One of the major opportunities identified is improved instructional delivery. Through communicative teaching activities, authentic language exposure, and interactive classroom approaches, ALTs enrich the English learning experiences of students. Richards and Rodgers (2014) emphasized that communicative language teaching promotes meaningful interaction and strengthens learners' fluency and confidence. Learner development is also enhanced through increased exposure to spoken English, collaborative activities, and learner-centered instruction. According to Ellis (2017), task-based and communicative activities improve learner engagement and encourage active participation in language learning.

The round system also strengthens teacher collaboration between ALTs and Japanese teachers. Co-teaching arrangements provide opportunities for sharing instructional strategies, lesson planning, and intercultural exchange. Friend and Cook (2017) explained that collaborative teaching improves instructional effectiveness and supports professional learning among educators. Professional growth opportunities likewise emerge as ALTs gain teaching experience, cultural competence, and exposure to diverse classroom settings. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) noted that practice-based professional development positively affects teacher effectiveness and adaptability.

In addition, school and community engagement are strengthened through participation in cultural activities, school programs, and community events that promote English learning and intercultural awareness. Epstein and Sheldon (2019) emphasized that school-community partnerships contribute to learner achievement and program sustainability. The round system also supports sustainability by maximizing limited teaching resources and extending English instruction to multiple schools. UNESCO (2021) highlighted that equitable access to quality education can be strengthened through collaborative and innovative educational models. These opportunities indicate that the round system has significant potential in enhancing English education when properly supported and managed.

Challenges in the Utilization of the Round System in English Education as Perceived by Elementary Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs)

Table 3 presents the challenges encountered in the utilization of the round system in English education as perceived by elementary Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in Kumagaya City. The identified challenges include instructional delivery, classroom management, collaboration with Japanese teachers, continuity of learning, cultural and linguistic adaptation, availability of teaching resources and materials, workload and scheduling, professional development opportunities, and monitoring and evaluation of learning outcomes.

Table 3: *Challenges in the Utilization of the Round System in English Education as Perceived by Elementary Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs)*

Areas of Challenges	Description
Instructional Delivery	Challenges related to lesson implementation, instructional consistency, and teaching strategies.
Classroom Management	Challenges in managing student behavior, participation, and classroom interaction.

Collaboration with Japanese Teachers	Challenges in communication, coordination, and co-teaching practices with local teachers.
Continuity of Learning	Challenges in maintaining consistent learner progress due to rotational teaching schedules.
Cultural and Linguistic Adaptation	Challenges in adjusting teaching approaches to Japanese culture and language contexts.
Availability of Teaching Resources and Materials	Challenges involving limited instructional materials, tools, and resources.
Workload and Scheduling	Challenges related to travel, time management, and multiple school assignments.
Professional Development Opportunities	Challenges in accessing training, seminars, and skill enhancement activities.
Monitoring and Evaluation of Learning Outcomes	Challenges in assessing student performance and tracking learning progress consistently.

Despite the opportunities offered by the round system, several challenges affect its implementation in English education in Kumagaya City. These challenges include issues related to instructional delivery, classroom management, collaboration with Japanese teachers, continuity of learning, cultural adaptation, resource availability, workload, professional development, and monitoring of learning outcomes.

One major challenge involves instructional continuity due to the rotational nature of the round system. Because ALTs move between multiple schools, maintaining consistent learner progress and follow-up instruction becomes difficult. Harmer (2015) explained that language acquisition requires continuous reinforcement and sustained interaction for learners to develop fluency and confidence effectively. Classroom management is another concern, especially for ALTs adjusting to Japanese school culture and expectations for student behavior. Marzano et al. (2015) emphasized that effective classroom management is essential in maintaining learner engagement and achieving instructional goals.

Collaboration with Japanese teachers may also be affected by limited co-planning time, communication barriers, and unclear role expectations. Butler (2011) noted that successful co-teaching requires shared understanding, effective communication, and institutional support. Cultural and linguistic adaptation further complicates instruction because ALTs must adjust teaching strategies to align with Japanese cultural norms and learners' linguistic backgrounds. Kramsch (2013) emphasized that culturally responsive teaching is necessary in multilingual and multicultural learning environments.

Workload and scheduling challenges are also significant due to travel demands, multiple school assignments, and preparation requirements. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018) found that excessive workload negatively affects teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and professional motivation. Limited teaching resources and insufficient professional development opportunities may further reduce instructional effectiveness and teacher preparedness. Additionally, monitoring and evaluating learner outcomes become difficult because ALTs have limited time to assess students consistently across schools. These findings suggest that stronger institutional support, collaborative planning, and professional development programs are essential in improving the implementation and sustainability of the round system.

Proposed Action Plan

“Enhancing the Effectiveness and Sustainability of the Round System in Elementary English Education in Kumagaya City”

I. Introduction

The round system implemented in Kumagaya City, Japan, is an innovative approach to strengthening English language education in elementary schools by deploying Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) across multiple schools. Under this system, ALTs rotate among several institutions to provide linguistic support, facilitate communicative language activities, and collaborate with Japanese teachers in delivering English lessons. This arrangement enables schools to maximize the expertise of a limited number of ALTs while expanding students' exposure to authentic English communication and intercultural interaction. The round system, therefore, plays an important role in improving the quality of English instruction and fostering global competencies among young learners.

The findings of the present study revealed that the round system offers numerous opportunities for enhancing instructional delivery, learner development, teacher collaboration, professional growth, school and community engagement, and program sustainability. Students benefit from increased motivation, authentic language exposure, and interactive learning activities. Teachers, on the other hand, gain valuable professional experiences through collaboration with Japanese educators and exposure to diverse classroom environments. These opportunities demonstrate the round system's potential to contribute to improving English education in Kumagaya City.

However, the study also identified several challenges that may affect the program's effectiveness. These challenges include limited instructional time due to rotational schedules, difficulties maintaining continuity of learning, variations in classroom management practices, limited availability of teaching resources, heavy workloads and scheduling constraints for ALTs, limited professional development opportunities, and difficulties monitoring student learning outcomes. Cultural and linguistic adaptation issues were also reported as factors that may influence teaching effectiveness. These concerns highlight the need for strategic interventions to strengthen the implementation of the round system and ensure that it continues to meet the evolving needs of students and educators.

In response to these findings, this action plan proposes a comprehensive framework to enhance the effectiveness, sustainability, and overall impact of the round system in Kumagaya City. The plan focuses on strengthening collaboration among educators, improving instructional support systems, enhancing professional development opportunities for ALTs, and establishing more structured monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. By implementing targeted strategies and coordinated efforts among stakeholders, this action plan aims to address existing challenges while maximizing the benefits of the round system for both teachers and learners. Ultimately, the plan seeks to contribute to the continuous improvement of English education and promote meaningful language learning experiences for elementary students in Kumagaya City.

II. General Objective

To enhance the effectiveness, sustainability, and quality of the round system in Kumagaya City by strengthening instructional delivery, teacher collaboration, professional development, resource availability, and monitoring mechanisms in elementary English education.

III. Specific Objectives

1. To improve instructional delivery and lesson continuity across schools participating in the round system.
2. To strengthen collaboration and communication between ALTs and Japanese teachers.
3. To enhance professional development opportunities and support systems for ALTs.

4. To improve the availability and accessibility of instructional resources and teaching materials.
5. To establish effective monitoring and evaluation systems for assessing student learning outcomes.

IV. Plan of Action

Key Findings from the Study	Strategies / Activities	Objectives	Key Performance Indicators	Persons Involved	Timeline	Source of Funds
Limited instructional time due to rotational schedule	Develop coordinated lesson planning templates and shared curriculum guides	Improve lesson continuity	80% of lessons follow coordinated lesson plans	ALTs, Japanese Teachers, School Heads	1st–2nd Quarter	School Budget
Fragmented continuity of learning	Implement shared lesson logs and progress tracking forms	Improve learning continuity	Lesson logs used in all participating schools	ALTs, English Coordinators	1st–3rd Quarter	School Funds
Classroom management challenges	Conduct classroom management workshops for ALTs	Strengthen classroom management skills	90% of ALTs attend training	School Administrators, Trainers	2nd Quarter	Professional Development Fund
Communication barriers between ALTs and Japanese teachers	Establish regular coordination meetings and communication channels	Strengthen teacher collaboration	Monthly coordination meetings conducted	ALTs, Japanese Teachers	Quarterly	School Budget
Limited teaching resources	Develop a shared digital repository of teaching materials	Improve resource accessibility	Online resource platform created and utilized	ALTs, IT Staff	1st–2nd Quarter	ICT Budget
Workload and scheduling constraints	Optimize ALT schedules and travel arrangements	Improve teacher well-being	Reduced scheduling conflicts	School Administrators	1st Quarter	Administrative Budget
Limited professional development opportunities	Organize annual ALT training and mentoring programs	Enhance teacher competencies	At least two training programs conducted annually	Education Office, Trainers	Annual	Education Fund
Difficulty monitoring student progress	Develop standardized English assessment tools	Strengthen evaluation of learning outcomes	Standardized assessments implemented	Curriculum Coordinators	3rd Quarter	Education Budget
Cultural and linguistic adaptation challenges	Conduct cultural orientation sessions for ALTs	Improve intercultural competence	Orientation sessions conducted annually	Education Office	Annual	Training Fund

V. Monitoring and Evaluation

The implementation of the action plan will be monitored through a structured monitoring and evaluation framework designed to assess progress and effectiveness. Regular monitoring activities will be conducted by school administrators, ALT coordinators, and education officials to ensure that planned strategies and activities are implemented according to the established timeline. Data will be collected through classroom observations, teacher feedback, lesson documentation, and student performance assessments. These monitoring mechanisms will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the round system and identify areas requiring further improvement.

Evaluation of the program will focus on key performance indicators such as improved coordination among teachers, increased participation in professional development activities, improved availability of teaching resources, and measurable improvements in student learning outcomes. Periodic

evaluation reports will be prepared to assess the progress of the action plan and guide decision-making processes for program enhancement. Feedback from ALTs, Japanese teachers, and school administrators will also be incorporated to ensure that the evaluation process reflects the experiences and perspectives of key stakeholders. Through continuous monitoring and evaluation, the action plan will support evidence-based improvements in the implementation of the round system.

VI. Sustainability Plan

The sustainability of the round system in Kumagaya City will depend on the continuous collaboration and commitment of educational stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers, and local education authorities. To ensure long-term sustainability, the program will emphasize capacity building among teachers through ongoing professional development and mentoring programs. Strengthening teacher competencies will enable educators to implement innovative teaching strategies effectively and sustain improvements in English instruction.

Another important component of sustainability is the establishment of collaborative networks among ALTs and Japanese teachers. These networks will facilitate the sharing of teaching resources, best practices, and innovative instructional approaches. The development of digital resource repositories and shared lesson documentation systems will also contribute to the program's sustainability by providing accessible teaching materials that can be used across schools.

Institutional support from local education authorities will further ensure the program's continuity by providing financial resources, training opportunities, and policy support. By integrating the round system into Kumagaya City's broader educational framework, the program can continue to evolve and respond to emerging educational needs. Through sustained collaboration, strategic planning, and continuous evaluation, the round system can remain a valuable initiative that enhances English education and promotes global competence among elementary students in Kumagaya City.

CONCLUSIONS

From the preceding findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The study concludes that the Assistant Language Teachers in Kumagaya City are predominantly young, female, and single professionals with bachelor's degrees, moderate teaching experience, and formal teaching qualifications, indicating a relatively early-career yet academically prepared group actively engaged in professional development and capable of supporting English instruction in elementary schools.
2. The study concludes that the round system provides significant opportunities for improving English education by enhancing instructional delivery, promoting learner motivation and confidence, strengthening collaboration between ALTs and Japanese teachers, supporting teacher professional growth, encouraging school and community engagement, and demonstrating potential for sustainable program implementation.
3. The study concludes that the round system presents several implementation challenges, including limited instructional time, classroom management difficulties, coordination issues with Japanese teachers, discontinuity of learning, cultural and linguistic adaptation barriers, inadequate teaching resources, heavy workloads, limited professional development opportunities, and challenges in monitoring student learning outcomes.
4. The study concludes that a structured action plan focusing on improved instructional coordination, strengthened teacher collaboration, expanded professional development opportunities, enhanced resource availability, optimized scheduling, and systematic

monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is necessary to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the round system in Kumagaya City.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above-mentioned findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

1. Recruitment and deployment of Assistant Language Teachers in Kumagaya City may continue prioritizing individuals with strong academic preparation and teaching qualifications. Opportunities for regular professional development, mentoring, and skill enhancement may further strengthen the competencies of early-career ALTs and support their long-term effectiveness in English instruction.
2. School administrators and education authorities may further strengthen the round system by promoting structured collaboration between ALTs and Japanese teachers, supporting communicative teaching strategies, and encouraging school and community participation in English-related activities to maximize the positive impact of the program on learner development.
3. Educational stakeholders may consider refining scheduling systems, enhancing coordination among teachers, improving access to teaching resources, and providing targeted professional support to address challenges related to instructional delivery, classroom management, cultural adaptation, and the monitoring of student learning outcomes.
4. The proposed action plan may be adopted and implemented collaboratively by school administrators, ALTs, and Japanese teachers to improve program coordination, strengthen instructional practices, enhance professional development initiatives, and establish consistent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that support the sustainability of the round system.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We express our gratitude to all individuals who provided assistance in completing this research. We would also like to express our gratitude to our colleagues and friends for their unwavering encouragement, support, and valuable comments over the entire process. Ultimately, our families warrant gratitude for their enduring patience and unwavering support throughout the entire process. These individuals contributed to the feasibility of this research.

AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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